

BT/CT/RAD Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 7, 2012, 10:00 AM

Attendees: Julie Nassif, Tanya Swanson, Deb Carter, Cheryl Gauthier, Matt Osborne, Caley Heckman, Tracy Stiles, Rebecca Hastings, Caryn Conley, Ginger Lijewski, Tom Coulombe, and Sydney Fuller-Jones

Facilitator: Julie Nassif

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 11th , 10:00am – 11:00am, Room 133

BT Lab (As Reported By Cheryl Gauthier)

- Cheryl reported on the following three areas:

1. The BT lab has received a couple of powders over the past couple of weeks. It was discussed that environmental specimens that have not been tested by PCR and/or TRF would be referred to the chemistry lab after the 5 day culture incubation period. Specimens that have tested negative by PCR and /or TRF can be referred to the chemistry lab after 24hrs, **if there is no growth**. If there is growth, discussions should occur to determine how long we should wait before referring the powder to chemistry.

2. Cheryl announced that the "Collecting and Submitting Suspicious Substances for Biological & Chemical Testing" powerpoint and the "Triage and Test Prioritization of Suspicious Environmental Specimens" have been updated and will replace the existing documents on the DPH website. A "Quick Reference Guide" for non-hazmat first responders was developed, which will also be posted on the DPH website. Please access the DPH website via the following link:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/provider/reporting-to-state/state-lab/emergency-prep/biological-or-chemical-environmental-sample.html>

3. APHL and NIST had a joint conference call last week calling for participation from public health laboratorians and first responders in an advisory Task Group, which will address the needs for competency assessment and proficiency testing for first responders who use field-based biothreat detection. Currently, this competency/proficiency program is specific to PCR testing with the Razor EX Biodetection System and will use yeast that contains biothreat agent DNA as a surrogate.

Training (As Reported by Deb Carter)

• Deb stated that she has updated the **Division 6.2 Infectious Substance Shipping Guide: Classification, Packing, Marking and Labeling** (last updated 2006) and placed it on the website. The APHL Select Agent SIG (special interest group) met on Tuesday, August 7th via a conference call. The topic was, completing the Form 4 properly. Yvonne Walker (from the SA program) answered questions and pointed out common errors on the SA Form 4.

Epi (As Reported by Matt Osborne and Ginger Lijewski)

- Matt and Ginger reported on the following three topics that they are being faced with in Epi:

1. *Brucella*

The new CDC recommendations are to obtain serum at baseline, 6, 12, 18, and 24 weeks post-exposure. They also added regular (weekly) symptom watch and **daily** self fever- checks through 24 weeks post exposure. The Epi SOP for *Brucella* has been updated to reflect these recommendations.

2. Arbovirus

The state completed aerial adulticiding activities in SE MA and is continuing to monitor for EEE and WNV in mosquito populations. To date there are no human cases of EEE or WNV.

3. Rabies

Epi continues to receive a heavy volume of bat exposures.

CST (As reported by Caley Heckman)

- Caley informed us that the CST sent a strike team to Rhode Island on August 1st to exercise replacing a team already in place. The theory is that during a prolonged operation teams from around the region would be able to assist each other with personnel and supplies.

As this operation was about to begin the 1st CST was called to Western Mass on August 2nd to test possible contaminants from a fire that was at a PCB destruction facility in Ghent, NY. The plume from that fire came through Western Mass and into Northwestern CT. Swipe samples were taken from nonporous surfaces and those samples were tested by a modified GC/MS method by the CST. These samples were tested by the 1st CST, the 11th CST and the 15th CST. All samples came out with no hazards identified, however without a standard, it's not clear whether PCBs or dioxins (breakdown products of PCB) would be seen. Each sample was also given to DEP so they can test those swipes using established methods and procedures.

- On August 3rd through the 5th the CST deployed to Chicopee to cover the Westover Air Show.
- 1LT Heckman also discussed doing a radiation exercise with Tom Coulombe in the Fall.

CT Lab (As reported by Julie Nassif)

- The CT laboratory is currently involved in a small scale exercise or "pop PT" for ricinine and abrine.

Radiation Control (As reported by Tom Coulombe)

- Tom reported that all routine monitoring of nuclear power plants for Massachusetts, which includes Pilgrim Station (MA), Seabrook Station NH) and Vermont Yankee (VT), continues to be current, continuous and unremarkable.
- An historical item of interest has surfaced recently and may become a newsworthy item involving the former Waltham Watch Company of Waltham. Because of the total quantity of recovered radioactive materials at this worksite and due to the new NRC regulations which became applicable since "911", the new owner, or their competent contractor, has been obligated to apply for a radioactive materials license from MDPH/ Radiation Control Program (RCP). Apparently, buildings in this complex are now being renovated into offices and apartments. The consultant to the property owner had previously documented that some of these buildings were used during the WWII war effort to manufacture self-luminous dials for military purposes. Therefore, radium-226 was used in the manufacturing process and has been recaptured by contractors working for the current property owner. Also, some Americium-241 has been recaptured at the site as well. That radioisotope is used in many consumer products, i.e., residential smoke detectors, in exempt quantities; and so, something other than watches may have been manufactured in "Waltham".

On July 26th, Josh Daehler, of the RCP made a required notification to the US NRC about this discovery and subsequent disclosure by the current owner/ consultant, which is posted in detail as a 'current' "event notification report" on the NRC website for August 3rd. This 'history' may become news eventually in Boston, but this situation does not represent any risk to public health. This material will be packaged and shipped to an authorized waste site and documented with RCP. Tom suspects that Josh Daehler, the new materials program supervisor (and former Waltham resident) will be following this matter very carefully for years to come.